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MANCHESTER

School of Design,

IN CONNECTION WITH THE GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS,
SOMERSET HOUSE, LONDON.

ON THE STUDY

OF THE

HISTORY, PRINCIPLES, AND PRACTICE

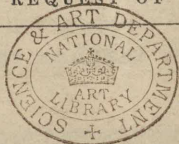
OF

ORNAMENTAL ART.

BY GEORGE WALLIS,

PRINCIPAL MASTER.

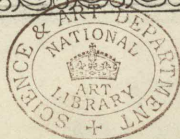
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THE STUDY
OF THE
HISTORY, PRINCIPLES, AND PRACTICE
OF
ORNAMENTAL ART:
AN ADDRESS,
DELIVERED JAN. 20, 1845,
TO THE STUDENTS
OF THE
MANCHESTER
SCHOOL OF DESIGN,
BY GEORGE WALLIS,
PRINCIPAL MASTER.

PRINTED BY REQUEST OF THE COUNCIL.



Manchester School of Design,

In connection with the Government School of Design, Somerset House, London.

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ADDRESS.

WHEN I had the pleasure of first meeting you, twelve months since, I deemed it necessary, before commencing my duties, to explain to you the course I intended to pursue, in order to promote, to the best of my ability, the future success of the MANCHESTER SCHOOL OF DESIGN. The experience of the intermediate period has made us more intimately acquainted with each other, and I have reason to hope that its results are alike satisfactory to you as Students, as I can assure you it is to myself as your Instructor. We no longer stand in the relation of doubting and untried strangers, but I hope a good basis has been laid for our future intercourse; and it is with a wish to strengthen this that I am now desirous of addressing you, trusting that by so doing I shall be enabled still further to promote your welfare, and conduct you into that course of study and practice which will enlarge your understanding to the true nature and importance of those branches of Art it is the especial object of this school to promote, and my duty to teach.

A correct knowledge of the History and Progress of Art is essential to the true progress of the student in every department; not in a limited sense, but should include all that is known of the religion, customs, and habits of those people amongst whom Art flourished in its purest forms, as well as the personal history or biography of those individual professors who carried it to the greatest perfection in their own works. This knowledge should extend not merely to our own country and times; but should embrace that of the remotest ages when the Imitative Arts first made their appearance, and should be traced down, through all its various phases, to our own day. The endeavour to acquire this knowledge must necessarily give rise to an investigation into the first principles of Art,—the leading ideas, and the peculiar forms such ideas took at various epochs of the world's progress; thus enabling us to understand the spirit in which our predecessors have worked, and to draw conclusions for our own practice accordingly.

Comparatively few artists in our own day possess this knowledge to the extent they ought to do, and are too easily satisfied by merely attaining to a certain dexterity of hand and accuracy of eye,—depending too much upon mere trick and display, instead of seeking to become acquainted with those sources of information which elevate the conception and stimulate the Ideal, so frequently to be met with in the Literature of Art,—connected as it is with the highest aims of the greatest nations; inasmuch as Art is the language in which the noblest aspirations of their minds have always been expressed. But if this can be said of the professors of what are termed the highest walks of Art, the fact is still more palpable in those who have hitherto professed

the Arts of Design as applicable to Decoration and Manufactures; nor can this be a matter of wonder, since, until lately, no attempt had been made to give them the slightest insight into the true principles of their Art; and, however disagreeable may be the fact, they have been simply a superior kind of workman, whose ideas never ranged beyond obtaining "*something new*," however absurd that "*something new*" might be. The consequence has been that, as a class, they have not commanded that respect and consideration which is ever willingly accorded to educated and well directed talent, let it be devoted to whatever pursuit it may. Now it is very desirable that this defect should be remedied; and, above all, that the Students of our Schools of Design should become not only well trained draughtsmen and designers, but that they should acquire such an extent of knowledge of what I have before termed the Literature of Art, as will enable them to think correctly on its principles, and to work out their ideas with intelligence and a thorough appreciation of the treatment required to give what I call, a good reading of their subject.

In order that this desirable result may be satisfactorily attained, the Council of the Government School at Somerset House has there formed an extensive Library of Works on Art, illustrating the various styles and periods in which it flourished in its best and purest forms, to be used by the Students to correct their taste, expand their ideas, and shew how and by what means the nations of past ages arrived at that eminence for which they have been so justly celebrated. In addition to this, a Lending Library is established for the use of those Students whose progress in study and whose conduct has been satisfactory; free access being allowed them under

certain regulations. These privileges are now about to be extended to all the Provincial Schools.

In the Manchester School, then, these advantages are now to be granted to you, and a Lending Library of Works, chiefly illustrative of the History of the Arts, and the Sciences connected therewith, has been sent from London, as the commencement of a collection of books which, I trust, ere long, will be so full and complete as to embrace every standard work on the subject. This Lending Library will be open to you on the same terms as the one at Somerset House, and I should trust that in your hands the works will be carefully studied and safely kept from injury.

By the kindness and liberality of many gentlemen connected with the School, a satisfactory commencement of a Library of Reference existed when I first came amongst you. To this a considerable number of standard works has been added by the Government, and we can now boast of possessing books and engravings illustrative of Ornamental Art, for reference, which, had it not been for this School, many of you would probably never have seen; but which will now be used to aid and assist you, at least those forming the Class about to be established for the study of the History, Principles, and Practice of Ornamental Design, in the attainment of that knowledge which is so highly essential to your future position as Decorative Artists. The study of these works in connection with those of the Lending Library, will tend still further to educate your eye, inform your mind, and elevate your ideas to a true appreciation of the important study in which you are engaged; and I trust the day is not very far distant when we shall have full and satisfactory proofs of how well you have used them.

The primary object, then, which I have in view in thus addressing you, is to point out the best means of using these facilities; in order that you should neither waste your time nor neglect the opportunity thus liberally afforded you; for I have frequently observed that when Students commence reading on any given subject, they are often led away from one point to another without thoroughly understanding either of them; instead of fairly commencing as near the beginning as may be, and making themselves well acquainted with one part of their subject before commencing another. Again, many begin reading without having any definite object in view, thus wasting their time in desultory efforts, and gaining nothing but scraps of intelligence, out of which comparatively few minds are ever able to make up any satisfactory results. There is, again, a third class, desirous to follow the right path, but who, owing to the want of some elementary knowledge of the subject they desire to investigate, or some information as to the best works to read in order to gain that knowledge, lose much time in searching for that which more experienced persons are enabled at once to give. It is, therefore, my present object to direct your attention to those points in the History, Principles, and Practice of Ornamental Art which my experience has shewn me it is most desirable should be thoroughly understood; and I shall always be ready to inform you, in the course of your studies, as to those works best calculated to instruct you on the various points requiring your attention, to which you may have access, either in our own library or in those of your town to which admission is attainable. Indeed, I originally intended to name various works, in the course of this review of the subject, to which

your studies are now to be directed ; but that I feared to make my discourse rather a catalogue of books than a means of calling your attention to the principal points in which those books will become your best instructors. Besides, I have my doubts as to the utility of setting up an arbitrary course of reading on any subject, inasmuch as the wants of the Student will always vary with the purpose for which he studies ; and with you, as to the pursuits to which you are eventually to apply your knowledge. Not that any information you may be able to obtain on this subject can ever be superfluous ; but let us obtain that which is most practically useful first. I shall therefore proceed to point out those periods in the History of Art, and glance at the leading features in its fundamental principles and practice, which I consider imperatively necessary should be investigated and known by every Student of Art, let his pursuits therein be what they may.

The earliest records of Art to which we have access, and from which any practical result is obtainable, are those of the Egyptian era ; not that this is the earliest period at which Art was successfully practised, since we are well assured that Hindostan possesses much earlier examples of architectural design than are to be found in Egypt, and that so far as manufacturing design is concerned, the productions of the East influenced those of every other country at a much earlier period, and to a much greater extent, than is generally supposed. And did it not interfere with my present purpose, proof might be adduced to shew how largely the Hindoos supplied the nations of antiquity with the productions of their rude loom ; so much so, that in every subsequent period, even down to our own day, the designs of India

have been more or less followed by the most civilised nations. At the present time the shawl patterns of Paisley are identical, in the principles of form, and the leading characteristics of colour, with those produced three or four thousand years ago on the banks of the Indus; and in mentioning this fact, (for such I believe it to be,) I cannot but express a hope that the day is not very far distant when we shall possess such a collection of the productions of India as will enable us more thoroughly to understand and appreciate the genius of a people whose primitive manufactures are the basis on which the commerce of Manchester has been raised, and upon the successful cultivation and improvement of which the happiness and prosperity of this great and industrious community so largely depends.

From such records of India as the Student may have access to, he will proceed to those connected with the Arts of Egypt, which, fortunately for our purpose, have been amply illustrated by the exertions of some of the most eminent travellers, architects, and painters of our own country, as also those of France and Germany.

Here, then, the Student will find the earliest principles of his Art, displayed in forms so simple as to offer no impediment to their full comprehension, provided he brings to his task an earnest feeling of research, and takes care to view his subject in its most extended aspect. He must not only acquaint himself with the forms used—the constructions raised, and the various modifications thereof, but he must endeavour to learn and thoroughly understand the peculiar circumstances under which Art was developed; and, by these means, ascertain the spirit in which the Artists of that period wrought. This mode of inquiry is particularly desirable

in your examination of every age ; but in none more so than that of Egypt and Greece,—since it is upon these, or rather, correctly speaking, upon the latter, that all subsequent Art has been, more or less, based ; and I have no hesitation in saying, that he who studies Egyptian Art thoroughly, will only understand and appreciate Greek Art the more,—inasmuch as the truth and beauty of the latter will strike him the more forcibly from an acquaintance with the Arts of Egypt, as the precursor, and, in many instances, the prototype of those of Greece. Not that the most perfect knowledge of the one will ever give even a slight positive knowledge of the other ; but, considering Art to be a continuous chain of the productions of various ages—each dependent, more or less, on its predecessor—I advocate the study of each era, as the best means of thoroughly appreciating the productions of all.

In Egyptian Art, the Student will find compositions and arrangements aiming at grandeur by means of simplicity of line and colossal proportions : decorations, the outlines of which are based, more or less, on an imperfect knowledge of geometry, as applied to these Arts ; which, however, were the precursors of the more skilfully-wrought Mosaics of later periods ; and coloured with a rude splendour of effect well suited to the forms thus further embellished.

The true spirit of Egyptian Art develops itself as the Student proceeds with his inquiry into the physical, the moral, and the intellectual state of the people of Egypt, at the period in which its greatest works were achieved ; and when, in a physical point of view, he makes himself acquainted with the peculiarity of the climate, and—morally and intellectually—with

the constitution of its laws—the nature of its religion, and, above all, the almost omnipotent power of its priesthood—he will at once understand the remarkable features which its monuments present. In short, he will not fail to discover that Egyptian Art, in its most stupendous results, was simply an enlargement of the symbolic idea on which their sacred writing—the language of the priesthood—was based; and, that their temples, pyramids, and obelisks, were themselves hieroglyphics on a large scale, on which was inscribed, as upon a tablet or in a book, the detail of the language of which each of these may not inappropriately be termed the monogram; so completely is the leading principle of Egyptian Art—unity of purpose—carried out in every point.

The practical utility of studying the Arts of Egypt may be objected to, and with good reason; yet, at all events, it will prevent future Designers falling into a similar error to that which many parties did, some years ago, in attempting to introduce Egyptian Architecture into a climate like our own,—which was persisted in until the discovery was made, that flat roofs were singularly inapplicable to a wet climate, and that the principle of Egyptian construction was to resist inundation from “the waters under the earth,” rather than from those “above the earth.” In the abstract, however, a knowledge of its principles, and, above all, of its spirit, will, in my opinion, be found eminently useful in tracing out the origin of other styles of Art, apart from the interest attached to the inquiry.

Having satisfactorily investigated the history and principles of Egyptian Design, the progress of the Arts in Greece forms the second great step in the Student's

inquiry. Here he will find that, from the earliest period of which we have any positive record, the Arts had been fostered as in a home peculiarly adapted for their highest development; and that, with greater freedom, a purer religion, and a stimulant to exertion totally wanting in the policy of Egypt,—and perhaps I might add, a natural susceptibility to the beautiful,—Greece achieved for itself, collectively, an imperishable name alike in Literature and Art. Ever aspiring to great ends—in peace or in war—in legislation or in commerce—in manners or in religion—these apt pupils of the merchants of Tyre in commerce, as of the Egyptians, and these same Phœnicians—those “cunning workers in brass,” recorded as the builders of the first temple at Jerusalem—in the Arts, carried *both* to a greater perfection than either of the people from whom their first lessons were derived. The spirit and grandeur of Tyre and Memphis have departed; but though ruin almost as complete has since fallen on Athens, its spirit yet lives in its Literature and its Art.

The type of the constructive part of a Greek temple is to be found in the primitive form of a wooden hut; yet however disposed I might be to attribute to the Greeks the possession of a genius of the highest order, I cannot agree with those who regard their productions as the result of their own unguided invention; because I believe them to have been very largely indebted, as I have just stated, to the Phœnicians for much of their early knowledge of the decorative part of Art, if not of the constructive also. Thus in the description of Solomon's Temple,* which you will remember was the

* 1 Kings, 6 chap; 2 Chronicles, 3 chap.

work of the Artists of Tyre, we find named "the porch *before* the temple of the house;" and again, "in the wall of the house he made narrowed *rests round about*, that the beams should not be fastened in the walls of the house." This is a plain description of the principle adopted in the arrangement of the columns (rests), entablature, and cella (the interior surrounded by walls) of a Greek temple. Of the decorative part we find it stated that the "cedar of the house within was carved with *knops* and *open flowers*;" and that "he carved the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubims, palm trees, and open flowers, *within* and *without*;" thus shewing that the decorations extended both to the exterior and the interior.

Are we not justified, then, in concluding, even from these quotations—which by no means embrace all that can be said upon the subject, but which you will do well to further investigate—that the Greeks obtained much valuable information from the Phœnicians, with whom they were constantly in communication, inasmuch as they are supposed to have been originally descended from that people. I have been more diffuse on this matter because I am desirous you should, in your own reading, carefully study the true origin of every style of Art; and as the Greek is that to which we look for the greatest perfection of principle, so I deem it necessary you should have the clearest possible understanding of it; for in the works of this extraordinary people the Student finds Nature—I had nearly said *outdone* in the higher aims of Art. Their statues live, breathe, almost think. Their Idealism reaches the perfection of human conception and handy work. In Decoration the Student will find Nature so beautifully adapted to the

purpose required, so completely fitted, that, though conventionalised, it grows perhaps more perfectly than a complete imitation would appear to do in the same position. In the flow of line, in the detail and composition of the mass, there are found all the requisites of the purest Art—truth, simplicity, regularity, variety, and grandeur harmoniously combined,—producing beauty unequalled!

Nor should we wonder at this result when we come to understand the means by which it was achieved. When we consider the spirit of their laws, the imaginative mythological traditions which formed the basis of their religion—elegant absurdity as it was—the nature of the observances connected therewith, and, above all, the genius or natural aptitude of the people, constantly excited by an emulation of the most powerful kind;—the Student, on learning this for himself, will at once find that he possesses the key to all their fame. Having done this, let him use it for his own purpose. I do not mean that he should copy the Greeks—we have tried that already—but let him think like a Grecian! That is, let him act upon the principles on which Greek Art was based, the spirit in which it was wrought out, and aim at achieving for himself and his country a similar result. This cannot be done by slavish, material imitation, but rather by an earnest desire to rival what he sees, and to use nature in the spirit in which they used it;—adapting their principles to the wants of his own times, and the embellishment of his own age, rather than copying that which illustrates times, places, and purposes totally different in their requirements to those of our own era. Yet whilst endeavouring to obtain all the good we can out of our study of the Arts of antiquity, we must endeavour to avoid the dangers of a

too exclusive devotion thereto, and ever remember the source from whence true Art springs. Why should we test nature by any Art-standard? We should rather test works or productions of Art by the true standard of all Art—Nature!—not by a minute comparison of detail, but by a grand adaptation of principle. This, I think, is the secret of the success of the Greeks: and this, the course of reading I am now recommending, will eventually influence you to believe. The result to myself has been this conviction, and it is borne out by the fact, that in all subsequent ages we find Art, whether of the purely historic class, or of that to which our present purpose is more immediately directed, has been invariably unsuccessful in its results, just in proportion to the departure of its professors and their patrons from this broad and catholic principle. To the Arts, as applied to Decoration and Manufacture, the result has ever been the same as to that of History. The two have invariably flourished and fallen together. The spirit of the one is ever the spirit of the other, because it is national; and more so, because in the best periods the leading minds in Art were conversant with and practised both; and remarkable instances may be shewn of the influence of the ornamental departments in training young minds for the highest walks of Art.

As a school, that of the Dutch is a remarkable example of the effect of the absence of this preliminary training, in the subjects which the Artists of that school invariably painted, in which slavish imitations of every-day life produced vulgarisms of extraordinary merit; yet undeniable vulgarisms at last. The want of that artistic education so essential to the proper direction of the future efforts of the painter, is here seen in

the broadest and most palpable manner, and the effects on British Art have been very similar; inasmuch as it is only in subjects of a like character to those of the Dutch School, possessing greater sentiment and refinement than theirs, yet constantly aiming more at the matter-of-fact than the ideal, that we can lay claim to being possessed of a School of Art.

The true object of all Art is to elevate and refine. How much, then, does it become the duty of the Artist to elevate and refine himself? particularly when the means of doing so are readily afforded him. We are expecting "figs from thistles," if we hope for that which will elevate and refine, out of minds uninstructed in those things which raise us above our nature. In Greece her Artists were the friends, the companions of the most refined and most polished of her rulers and sages. The painters of the Dutch School were the boon companions of the boors they painted. The result is known to every one who has studied this question, and will be known to you, I trust usefully, and that the contrast thus abruptly placed before you will not have been drawn in vain. Between the two, however, there is an immense space of time to account for, in which I shall endeavour to point out the leading features; but the principle I have laid down for your guidance will be fully borne out through every step of that period; and you will find that just in proportion as Art was made to elevate Nature, so its professors were elevated in their respective ages and countries, and that their highest aims ever arose out of the highest motives; and these were furnished them, on the one hand, by a fostering education, and, on the other, by the high appreciation of their rulers and fellow-men.

The next step after the Greek, in due course, will be that of the Roman period; but before proceeding to name the points most deserving of your attention, I will bring down the connecting links between Egyptian and Roman Art. Egypt was subject to Roman rule at the same time as Greece, and you will find that this fact had much to do with the forms which Art took on its introduction at Rome. The Greek period may be divided into Early Greek, Pure Greek, (or, as it is often termed, the Greek of Phidias, by some the Age of Pericles, during which its highest productions were executed,) Late Greek, when the sublime idealism of the Attic School became deteriorated; and, lastly, Græco Roman, in which the influence of Roman taste and authority further deteriorated that which it vainly endeavoured to improve, or even rival. Nor must we forget that the great majority of the Artists of Rome were Greeks working in a new spirit, under new rulers, and a new order of things; amongst which may be named a certain contempt for any one who practised aught but the profession of arms; and as the Latins were as ready as the unrefined in our own day in bestowing derisive names, so we find them naming one of the *Fabii* as *Pictor*, in contempt, it is supposed, for his practice as a painter; and yet this same Fabius Pictor must have been a man of education, since he is said to have been the first who wrote a history of his country. Besides, his family, though divided into many branches, was one of the most illustrious in Rome, and Plutarch draws a parallel between one of them, Fabius Maximus, and Pericles. I have ventured to name this point the more fully, because it will illustrate my meaning when calling upon you to observe, in the course of your reading, the feeling with which Art and

its professors are treated, as indicating the spirit of the times in which they practised, and as a key to that in which they worked; for I believe that in this respect, the appreciation of their fellow-men, and the result of that appreciation as seen in their productions, ever were and ever will be indissolubly connected.

A mighty change took place in Art under Roman rule, and its spirit was essentially different from that of the pure Greek period. Fond of power, of magnificent display, and luxurious enjoyment, together with brutal and debasing sources of amusement and recreation, the Romans regarded Art rather as a means of working out all these than as a source of instruction, elevation, and religion. The Greeks aimed at doing honour to the gods by their Arts—the Romans at doing honour to themselves! From Egypt they obtained ideas of magnificence as the result of colossal proportions; and in endeavouring to engraft the purity and elegance they did not fail to see in Greek Art, upon this notion of size, they destroyed its sentiment whilst enlarging its proportion. Their use of the arch and dome, which you will find were now first introduced as a means of embellishment, however authorities may differ as to their earlier use as a means of construction, gave so far a new and original feature to Roman design, inasmuch as their use opened a wide field for innovation, and a new adaptation of old forms of decoration: for none can be said to have been invented. As the Romans stole their mythology from Greece, so they stole their Arts also, and they mutilated both; but without destroying the means of recognising whence they obtained them.

In thus stating the relative merits of Greek and Roman design, I by no means wish to influence your own

examination of them. All I desire is to give you such hints as may enable you to arrive at fair conclusions for yourselves; for without this, your study is useless, and my teaching mere dictation.

Whilst reading on Greek and Roman Art, your attention will be forcibly attracted to those early Greek colonies in Italy, the remains and productions of which are usually called Etruscan, but which examination has shewn to be identical with the productions of Greece, so far as *fictile* decoration is concerned. In studying these, you will at once see how unsparingly decoration was carried into the arts of every-day life. But perhaps the most remarkable instances of this are to be found in the two Roman cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum, in which the Arts of Greece appear to have flourished under forms of which we have no other record than the remains of these ruined cities destroyed more than 1800 years ago. Here we find Art carried into all the relations of life, from the embellishment of the Temple, the Theatre, and the Bath, to the humblest instrument of domestic use. With Greek forms and colouring, assimilating very closely to the Egyptian in the polychromatic effects of decoration,—vivid, brilliant, and powerful,—this Græco Roman style presents ~~an inter-~~ *profitable* ~~esting~~ field for inquiry, which our reading serves to render so interesting as to amount almost to fascination. Nor will the Student fail to observe the great use made of the human figure in these decorations, and he will at once perceive how essential it is that he should understand this thoroughly, since in decorations of this kind, and indeed I may say in all combinations of the figure with ornament, the result depends upon the grace and truth with which the figure is adapted to the situation.

assigned to it in the design. I am informed, however, that the figures found on the walls of Pompeii and Herculaneum, though possessing much beauty of outline, are marked by a singular absence of anatomical knowledge in the internal details. But the ornamentist who uses this style in the present day, must aim at making his figures complete in all their parts; and it is, therefore, for this purpose, together with its general application to every style of Ornamental Art, that the figure must now be thoroughly studied in combination with ornament, by those to whom it will be essentially useful: as I told you in my last address, "not merely as a *means* of acquiring the power of drawing, but, always for its own sake, as an *end*, and with reference to some department or branch of the Art of Design necessarily and essentially requiring it."

The period of Art I have just alluded to is further interesting on account of furnishing us with some of the earliest and most legitimate specimens of Fresco and Fresco-secco; since the former is a style of Art likely to become popular in this country, and the latter presents a field for the ornamentist by which decorative effects of a very pleasing and durable character may, after sufficient study, be easily produced; and which I hope to have the pleasure, at no very distant period, of introducing amongst yourselves, as a new source of emolument and reputation to the persevering and skilful Students of Decorative Painting. I have been assured by Mr. Wilson, the Director of the School at Somerset House, who has carefully examined the remains of Pompeii and Herculaneum, that Fresco-secco, or a method very analogous to it, was, in all probability, the means by which the Egyptians decorated their

tombs. My own conviction is, that it was the earliest permanent method of painting ever practised, from the simplicity of its execution, and apparent durability.

With the introduction of Christianity, and the fall of the Roman empire, came other modifications in Design, and the Art of the age of Constantine became the forerunner of changes which eventually created a style of Art as distinct as any which had yet appeared. Prior to this consummation, Art passed through an ordeal well calculated to shake its integrity of purpose, for the Student will find that the fragments of Pagan temples were mixed together into a heterogeneous mass, for the purpose of erecting churches for the purer light of Christianity. But with the devotion of the disciples of the (to them) new faith, came a desire to emancipate it from the trammels of its Pagan adornments, and during the period in which Rome and its power lay prostrate at the feet of the northern barbarians, Art was slowly struggling on to burst anew upon the world, in a form as essentially in accordance with the spirit of the age, as that of any to which I have had occasion to direct your attention.

Before proceeding to trace the spirit and effects of this change, I would call your attention in another direction, as shewing how far past results influence other nations. You will find that Byzantium having become the seat of the eastern portion of the Roman empire, and its name changed to that of Constantinople; its rulers, particularly the Emperor Constantine, from whom it derived its new appellation, brought all the Arts of Greece and Rome to this new centre of Roman power; but in a new spirit, more calculated to suit that of the religion to which the people had become in a great mea-

sure converted. The subsequent rise of Mahomedanism on the same spot gave, again, a new direction to the classic Arts, and these in combination with the knowledge of Persian and Arabian Art possessed by the followers of the Impostor Prophet, eventually produced the style of Art now known as Moorish or Saracenic ; but which has left in its transition from the classic, another modification which is peculiar to Turkey, of which, however, we have no very accurate details. Its peculiarities of construction chiefly consist of a somewhat barbaric modification of the dome, and an approach to Pointed Design in its minarets and towers.

In Manufacturing Design, Turkey and Persia have a high reputation. The carpets of the former are deservedly prized for their beauty, alike of design as execution and material. The Persian rug, too, is equally valued as an adornment of our libraries and drawing rooms ; not only as an object of taste, but as an article of luxury ; yet the designs are similar now to what they were ages ago. Nor are the Asiatics remarkable for their adherence to the style and method of treatment used in objects of commerce alone ; for an eminent living painter has distinctly proved that the costume of Western Asia is that of the ancient Israelites. From Asia the illuminators of books during the middle ages derived the practice of their art, and the Persaic and Arabic manuscripts to be found in many public libraries, both in this country and on the Continent, display a splendour of decoration not surpassed probably by that of the best periods of Christian Art. Of course they possess all the peculiarities of Persian design. In this respect they are the more valuable, as shewing how distinctly even a semi-barbarous people are enabled to

give identity to their Arts, when they are worked out with spirit, energy, and talent.

Of the Moorish—or Moresque, as it would be perhaps better to call it—you will find ample information, and a field for the exercise of your taste, ingenuity, and research, which few other styles will afford you. The finest specimen of which we possess accurate information is the Alhambra in Spain. Here, again, a new spirit seems to have come over Art, and influenced it in the production of effects, of a character as distinct as that of any other style. Betraying an elaboration of detail perfectly bewildering to the eye of the uninitiated; it will be for you to investigate its principles,—to reduce its complexity to simplicity, and thus make yourselves masters of a style of Art which, with some modification, may be made extremely valuable to the peculiar manufactures of this district.

It is related that so desirable did Raffaele esteem it to acquaint himself with the principles of this style of decoration, that he sent some of his pupils to Spain for the purpose of making sketches of the ornaments of the Alhambra; and in all probability many of the ideas which form the basis of his famous Arabesques, were derived from this source, though we cannot easily trace them. I think, however, that it is by no means improbable that this incident was the origin of their name, as of that of all similar ornaments executed since that period; for such compositions had been previously, or at least during the Roman period, called Grotesques.

In the course of your reading you will find many speculations and arguments as to how far the early Christian architects were indebted to the Moresque for the type of their subsequent productions. My own

impression is that each started from a given point, namely, the ruin of Classic Design, and the incongruous mixture occasioned by engrafting the details of one building upon the constructive part of another, erected in another form, and for a totally different purpose to that which the ornaments had originally embellished. This produced new effects, which were afterwards investigated, and from this source it was that Christian Design took a positive form under the name of Byzantine. At the same time Mahomedan Design arose, and was influenced by Persian and Arabian Art; together, probably, with some remains of Egyptian sentiment.

Before quitting what has been very appropriately termed Saracenic Art, as embracing both Turkish and Moorish Design, I would remark, that many of its leading features are essentially geometric; that is, the forms are either based on, or actually consist of geometrical compositions; and in studying it, you will do well to carefully analyse the detail. Indeed you will find this course is highly essential to a perfect acquaintance with the object of your study. A preliminary knowledge of the leading principles of geometry will be very necessary, and you must carefully apply this test whenever it is in your power. Many rules and principles for your future guidance will discover themselves by this means.

Having quitted Pagan associations, the style and period of Art which will now demand your attention is that most associated with the productions of our own land, for in Britain it was carried to the greatest perfection; I allude to what has been well termed, Christian Art. This, you will find, had its periods—and, I may say, styles, or at least modifications—within itself, commencing with Byzantine, in which geometric forms

and rude uncouth figures, yet possessing much sentiment, prevailed. Gold and colours are profusely scattered over the whole of the decorations, and many of the details bear a marked analogy to Moresque forms, but with a totally different expression in the general effect; for there is an expression in every true style of ornament. From this, very similar in some points, but more rude and uncouth, particularly in its Architectural construction, came the styles known amongst us as Saxon and Norman Gothic. Each of these are worthy your particular attention. Nor should the illuminated decorations of the early Saxon manuscripts be forgotten, since in them you will find a store of Ornamental Art of such a character as to astonish, whilst they instruct.

Having fairly commenced your reading in English Architecture, as forming a very considerable part of your inquiry into Christian Design, it will be better to proceed with it, not that your attention should be devoted to Architecture alone, but may embrace everything calculated to illustrate the progress of your Art in our own country,—Ecclesiastical decorations of every kind—Stained-glass Windows, which alone afford most interesting objects for study,—Furniture, Dresses, Arms, Tapestry, Embroidery, Illuminated Books, in fact all and everything calculated to extend your views, expand your ideas, and mature your judgment. In the illuminated manuscripts, the production of which extended over a period of from five to six hundred years, are to be found designs of unsurpassable beauty, in which the designer of woven fabrics may find examples, the value of which cannot be sufficiently appreciated, even by those who are tolerably well acquainted with them.

How, then, can we expect persons to do so who never saw, or probably never heard of them?

Through a long series of years, then, I may almost say ages, must your reading extend. You must investigate the various eras of English Design, known as Saxon, Norman, Pointed, Early Decorated, Florid Design, Transition, Perpendicular, and, lastly, that usually called Elizabethan, and observe how each of these are interwoven together, or stand out pure and unmixed. This, at first sight, may look too much like a course for an Architect alone. Deceive not yourselves, nor suffer others to deceive you! It is your business as Designers to possess a knowledge of all this, if you are ever to take a successful position by the side of your Continental neighbours; for it is the possession of this knowledge which is the strong-hold of their success. Above all things, believe not the oft-repeated assertion that you are already equal to the Designers of France and Germany, for such is not the case. Every fact is against such an assumption, and none more so than that you have never yet had the opportunities for obtaining the requisite preliminary knowledge that they have had. Therefore, now that every effort is being made to give you these opportunities, avail yourselves of them, and let those who flatter themselves, and are content with the notion, that they have already acquired all the requisite knowledge for the exercise of their profession, go on in a blissful state of ignorance, until a few more years shall have shewn them their folly in supposing that the pursuit in which they are engaged is exempt from the great law of progression, and consequently of improvement.

During the periods of English Design indicated for

your study, the Arts had, of course, been progressing on the Continent. In Italy, the revival of them in the fourteenth century, was the stepping stone to the perfection attained in the fifteenth; and this is the period at which Italian Art reached its highest point of excellence. Here—where it fell under Paganism—in Rome, it rose again under Christian sway, until its brightest stars appeared in the persons of Michael Angelo and Raffaele.

The Arts of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries present a wide field for your investigation. Every step is full of interest, not the less so to the Student of Decorative Art than to him who aims at the pursuit of history. To the former its lessons are invaluable. First, as shewing how the greatest painters and sculptors of that age considered it imperative upon them to understand and practise everything connected with the immediate purpose of their Art. Raffaele designed for tapestries, and the vestments of the clergy; some authorities say, also, for the productions of his father's pottery.* The magnificent Arabesques designed by him for the decoration of the Vatican, were executed by his pupils, under his own superintendence, as a preliminary step to the practice of the higher subjects of

* Authorities differ as to the early pursuits of Raffaele. Some assert that he lost his parents at the age of twelve: others that they established a pottery at Urbino, where the painter was born. All are agreed, however, that his father, Giovanni dé Santi, was an Artist of some talent, and employed a portion of his time at least in painting the ware now known by the name of *Faience*, a manufactory of which existed at Urbino: and this was probably the first school of the great painter. But so little is known on the subject, even the date of his pupilage with Perugino being uncertain, that it is desirable to qualify the statement respecting his employment in his father's pottery.

Art, and many of the figures with which they abound, were doubtlessly executed by himself. In this School, then, you will find that such men as Julio Romano and Andrea-del-Sarto were trained.

Nor was the practice confined to the School of Raffaele alone, for it was carried through all the leading schools of Italy; and at a much later period in other countries;—ere art again sank into comparative insignificance, the leading masters were panel and ceiling painters. In the Palace of the Luxembourg, at Paris, is to be seen, at this day, a chamber which was decorated by Rubens, Nicholas Poussin, and Philip de la Champagne, for Mary of Medicis, in a style so complete within itself, as to render it a perfect casket of Ornamental Art.

The metal-workers of Italy were invariably pupils of some of the great masters of this period, whose practice as ornamentists enabled them to impart such a knowledge to their pupils that their productions possess all the requisites of the very finest Art. Benevenuto Cellini is an extraordinary instance. This artist-goldsmith, a pupil of Michael Angelo in the study of the figure, has left a name almost equal to that of any of his contemporaries who practised painting and sculpture; and his works, now so highly prized, may be said to have produced a new style of Art, arising out of the classic models then used in Italy; to which he added a luxuriance of fancy never excelled in any age; and from the productions of this man came the styles known in France as that of Francis I., and in this country, with considerable modification and deterioration, as Elizabethan.

As I am not now lecturing on styles, but upon the best means of studying them, I am compelled from want

of time to forego entering into the detail of matters which would require a lecture on each period, with numerous illustrations, to do full justice to the subject; I must, therefore, proceed to inform you as to what may be considered the last modification of classic design, until we come down to our own day. All of you have heard of the style *Louis Quatorze*, so called from its having flourished during the reign of Louis XIV. of France. You will find, however, that the ornaments known under that title do not really belong to the era of that monarch; and that, in fact, (though probably in saying so I shall differ from many persons who really understand the question,) the real style used in this reign, was no new style of Art, but simply a modification of Italian design, enriched and made more gorgeous by gilding, colours, pictured panels, and some very egregious inconsistencies of composition. The moderate absurdities, however, of this reign were rendered positively ridiculous in the subsequent one: and the ornaments, furniture, and decorations, usually termed *Louis Quatorze*, which the pernicious taste of the period, now passing away, has rendered, I may say, notorious, should, in reality, be called the Scroll-and-Shell style of Louis XV. I have laid the more stress upon this point, because I would wish to warn you how you practise it; since, however popular it might be, I am not here to cater to what I honestly believe to be a most mischievous taste, but to direct your attention to that which is really good, and induce you to avoid that which is bad.

We have now arrived at the conclusion of our survey of the History of Art; and I have no doubt that those amongst you who have perseverance to go fairly through

the course of study now recommended, and I hope all of you will have this perseverance, will not fail to obtain a most valuable insight into the principles and practice of Ornamental Art, in the various periods to which I have directed your attention; and that you will be led to view your Art in an entirely new aspect, as one which has a claim upon all your energies, and one in which a brilliant reward awaits those who successfully cultivate it. Nor will you have failed to discover that an Artist may paint very tolerable pictures of every class, even of History, without knowing very much of this, which it ought to be his first aim to learn; but you may rely on this, that he who hopes to obtain a high position as a painter of history, ought to study Decorative Art, as it is one of the chief points on which the truth of his picture must depend. Costume, architecture, time, and locality depend upon this. Nor can any one ever become a first-rate ornamentist without thoroughly understanding his Art, as perfectly, in theory at least, as the historical painter. In short, he who would aspire to the title of a true Artist, must be a true Ornamentist also, and the latter ought to possess all the requisites of the former. The result, if this course were pursued, would be a higher appreciation on the part of the general public,—a great self-dependence on the part of the professor of the Art of Design,—a lifting up, in fact, in the scale of society, of those individuals whom, as I said at the commencement, it is the especial object of this School to instruct.

In obtaining a knowledge of the principles of Historic Design, the lectures of the eminent professors of our own country will be found of the greatest possible value. Those of Reynolds, Fuseli, Opie, and Flaxman, abound

with principles which, if applied to Decorative Art, would tend to elevate and refine it; but this must depend entirely upon the intelligence, skill, and perseverance of the Student. The principles of true Art are ever the same, let them be applied to what purpose they may; and he who constantly applies and adheres to the best principles, will undoubtedly succeed in the greatest degree.

The modern styles of France and Germany need no comment here, inasmuch as they are based on a perfect knowledge of all those styles to which I have now directed your serious attention and study. There is, however, a style of Art which, be it ancient or modern, possesses much to recommend it to our attentive consideration, though not to our imitation. I allude to the Chinese. Perhaps no people, in our own age, have been so much misunderstood; and although specimens of their Arts have been brought to Europe for ages past, yet it is only at the present time that we are beginning to appreciate their true character. With a style essentially national, they present nothing which we can with propriety imitate, although this has been done in many of our manufactures, and only proves how dependent we have been upon specimens in which there is nothing applicable, to our purpose at least, but extreme novelty; thus betraying our want of an elementary knowledge of the true principles of Design, as required by our manufactures: yet, as I said before, the Chinese are well worthy of some share of our study, as illustrating the spirit with which Art may be carried into the purposes of every-day life; and as shewing that in national design there is an oneness of feeling, in proportion to the

independence with which the Artist works out his conceptions.

It has long been supposed that the Chinese had no knowledge of the laws of perspective, but represented every object on one plane. This is quite as ridiculous as the opinion entertained by them of us as "*outward barbarians*." The truth is, that pictures are painted by Chinese Artists, as true in linear perspective as any works of a similar class produced by ourselves; and I have seen views of towns and sea-ports, the drawing of which would have done no discredit to our best architectural landscape painters.

Having thus traced out your path to the knowledge I wish you to acquire, it may not be out of place to glance at the result of this instruction, and the possession of this knowledge, on the Continent. In France and Germany, the leading professors of Art are also the leading designers for decoration and manufactures. The result is well known to all of you, and that to these individuals the commerce of their respective countries is largely indebted. But between these and the workman, stands a class of Artists of which we know nothing in this country, who devote their talents entirely to Decoration and Industrial Art. These are men of high intelligence; men who associate with the superior classes of their fellow countrymen, and are deservedly held in high esteem.

If you visit their *ateliers*—workshops, we should call them—you would find them busily engaged in the preparation of designs, and in the production of various specimens of Art or Manufacture, with which it is their province to supply their fellow men, native or foreign;

and in the garb of working modellers, carvers, bronze casters, and other pursuits connected with the Arts, you find men whose conversation displays a store of knowledge not often met with in some of our best painters and sculptors. One instance I cannot resist relating to you, because, though it is simple in itself, it struck me very forcibly at the time it occurred, and it will illustrate my meaning when advocating the attainment of this knowledge by yourselves. I had occasion, during my late visit to Paris, to make inquiry for a friend as to the cost of producing several statues of knights in armour, the designs for which were to be furnished, if necessary, to the modeller. On waiting upon one of the class of Artists just named, I found him actively engaged, with others under his direction, in modelling a magnificent fountain. His dress was that of a workman; but the Artist and the gentleman shone through his garb. When he understood my business, everything was shewn to me calculated to prove his ability for the task; and, "*as to the designs,*" he said, "*they would be of no consequence, since it was only necessary to state in what age the armour was worn, in which each figure should be represented, to enable him to undertake the commission without them.*" I could not fail to contrast this with the amount of knowledge in these matters usually found amongst ourselves. Let us determine, then, that these things shall be equally known to us, nor any longer content ourselves with a mere mechanical dexterity of hand, or an appearance of originality, which we certainly possess, yet suffer it to fall into the absurd for the want of sufficient intelligence how to make the most of, and rightly direct our ideas.

Nor need we copy the styles of other periods any

farther than is necessary to make ourselves acquainted with their principles and effects. For it must ever be remembered, that to know Art thoroughly we must practise it. Out of the nature we have around us, than which no country can boast of more beautiful examples, our Art should come: and from this we may eventually produce a style as essentially fitted to the wants of our own age, as that of any preceding period was adapted to its own requirements. Our institutions, our habits, our domestic arrangements require no change for this purpose. Let us take the *home-feeling* so peculiar to our country, and bring around our little temples of the affections, that which the Egyptian, the Greek, and the Roman lavished on the temples of their gods. Our religion presents little field for the displays required by ancient systems: simplicity and truth are its best adornments. The public buildings of our land surely present as extensive a field for the practice of the highest aims of the Ornamentist as those of any other nation. The walls of such an institution as our own, and as that in which we are now assembled,* ought to present opportunities for the artistic talent growing up around them. With a history as full of incident and profitable lessons,—with a literature as full of fine sentiment as any the world has seen,—with such poets as Chaucer, Spenser, Shakspeare, Milton, and Byron, why should we seek themes in other lands, or in the literature of other nations? If we are careful of the good we have within us, we need not seek for examples elsewhere.

Let the Student, then, cultivate his mind and raise his ideas, by gaining a thorough knowledge of all and

* The Manchester Athenæum.

every thing connected with his Art. Having done this, he will command the respect and esteem of every class of society; and, instead of being reproached with ignorance and presumption in attempting to imitate that which he does not understand, he will be encouraged to strike out a path for himself, and by thus becoming independent in his Art, he will not fail to arrive at that true independence of position which is ever the result of well-directed talent. And whilst elevating himself in the scale of society, he will assist in placing his country in that position which she ought to hold in Art, amongst those nations compared with which, in every other respect, she is so proudly preëminent.

Think, then, for yourselves. Study earnestly and unceasingly. Never be satisfied with a mere smattering, or with the superficialities of Art or its literature. And when the time shall arrive when you, in the natural course of events, shall assume the place of teachers, masters, and leaders in your immediate community, remember that the knowledge you possess belongs as much to your fellow-men as to yourselves; and as you have had privileges in the attainment of it, which smoothed your road and lighted your path to excellence, even so endeavour, in a still greater degree, out of your own superiority to instruct those dependent on and surrounding you, and as you have "freely received, freely give."

I would warn you, however, that all this will not be attained without a struggle which will try your perseverance and industry; but the active and earnest exercise of these will bring you triumphantly through: and however meanly British Decorative Art may be thought of now, I have that confidence in the talent, the skill, the energy and ingenuity of my countrymen, most

sincerely to believe, that they will eventually show the world that they needed but well-regulated opportunities of study, and the encouragement of their fellow-men, to leave to future ages an example of refinement in Art, equal to that of any other period in the world's history.

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